

ER-9-3629/a

23 MAY 1957

Mr. Hugh S. Canning, Jr.
Special Assistant to the
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Hugh:

Many thanks for sending me the copy of
your Intelligence Brief on "Prospects for an
Independent Sumatra."

I read it with a good deal of interest
and have passed it on to Bob Amory.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

Allen W. Dulles
Director

O/DCI/ jnf 23 May 57

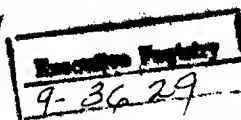
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SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

20 May 1957

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Dear Allen:

I believe you will be interested in the attached copy of a memorandum, together with its attachment, Intelligence Brief No. 2122, "Prospects for an Independent Sumatra," which I have this morning addressed to the Secretary.

Sincerely yours,

Hugh S. Cumming, Jr.
Special Assistant, Intelligence

Enclosures:

Cy of memo to Secy
with cy 32 of IB-2122
(SECRET)

The Honorable
Allen W. Dulles,
Director of Central Intelligence,
Washington.

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To: The Secretary
Via: S/S
From: R - Hugh S. Cumming, Jr.
Subject: Prospects for an Independent Sumatra

20 May 1957

Attached Intelligence Brief No. 2122, "Prospects for an Independent Sumatra," concludes that, despite a strong military position and substantial popular support, Sumatran dissident leaders are unlikely to declare Sumatra independent in the immediate future.

The question of Sumatra's independence has been raised by the unexpectedly swift pace of events in the area in the last nine months. In response to long-standing resentment in Sumatra at the failure of the central government to carry out development programs and as a result of personal antagonisms in the Indonesian Army, a series of bloodless uprisings began on 20 December in Central Sumatra and ended 10 March in South Sumatra. As a result of the uprisings the central government lost effective control of all of Sumatra, except for the rubber and tobacco estate area near Medan in North Sumatra.

There has been no resolution of the political-military impasse. The promulgation of an emergency decree on 8 May, establishing a National Council (a pet project of Sukarno's), appears to have led the Sumatrans to conclude that Sukarno plans to establish a dictatorship. Tension is believed to have risen higher than at any time in recent months. This tension, coupled with the presence of former Vice-President Hatta and Masjumi leader Natsir in Sumatra, has tended to lend credence to recurring but unconfirmed reports that Sumatran leaders intend to establish an independent Sumatra. However, in a speech delivered on 16 May in Central Sumatra, Hatta limited his support of the Sumatran insurgents to advocacy of regional autonomy, and by implication opposed any immediate move to establish an independent Sumatra. Dissident military leaders who shared the platform with Hatta denied any separatist intent.

Paramount considerations discouraging a Sumatran declaration of independence are: a lack of unity of purpose on the part of Sumatran leaders; their denials of intent to take action to fragment Indonesia politically; ethnic differences among the people of Sumatra; and the serious political and economic problems that would face an independent Sumatra. The central government in Djakarta may eventually seek to relieve some of the tension with the provincial administrations by implementing an expanded program of public works, using domestic and foreign sources of capital, including US developmental aid and possible Japanese reparations payments. For the immediate future, however, the present stalemate is likely to continue.

A similar memorandum with attachment has been addressed to the Under Secretary.

Copies to: G, C, S/P, FE

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This document consists of 1 page.

Cy 2 of 4 copies, Series A.

Intelligence Brief

No. 2122

May 17, 1957

Office of Intelligence Research

PROSPECTS FOR AN INDEPENDENT SUMATRA

A review of recent reports from Indonesia indicates that tensions, particularly in Sumatra, are greater than at any time since regional movements began to make themselves felt last autumn. The feeling of Sumatran leaders against the central government is reported to be hardening, while there is considerable speculation as to reasons for the reported presence in Sumatra of former Vice-President Hatta and Masjumi leader Natsir, both Sumatrans, as well as other leaders sympathetic to the rebellious territorial commands. While these indicators point to the possibility that Sumatran leaders may decide to cut the few remaining ties that bind them to the central government, there is insufficient evidence to sustain an estimate that this will occur in the immediate future. On the contrary, there are cogent considerations -- of which the Sumatran leaders must be aware -- which make a declaration of independence unlikely and which work for a continuation of the present stalemate with the central government.

Background

The question of Sumatra's future has been raised by the unexpectedly swift pace of events in the area in the last nine months. In response to long-standing resentment in Sumatra at the failure of the central government to carry out development programs and as a result of personal antagonisms in the Indonesian Army, a series of bloodless uprisings began on December 20 in Central Sumatra and ended March 10 in South Sumatra. As a result of the uprisings the central government lost effective control of all of Sumatra, except for the rubber and tobacco estate area near Medan in North Sumatra.

THIS IS AN INTELLIGENCE REPORT AND NOT A STATEMENT OF DEPARTMENTAL POLICY

SECRET

- 2 -

The central government made two efforts to restore the situation by military means. On December 25 Sukarno demanded that the rebellious Sumatran Army leaders surrender while he simultaneously stimulated leftist elements in the Army in North Sumatra to depose Col. Simbolon, the rebellious Army leader. Although forced out of Medan, Simbolon continued to have the support of most of his command, and a possible clash between pro- and anti-government forces in North Sumatra was narrowly averted. On March 31, Sukarno, working through leftist elements in Army headquarters in Djakarta, stimulated Army regimental commanders in Palembang to revolt against the territorial commander, who had previously broken relations with the central government March 10. Sukarno arranged to have 200 Javanese paratroopers flown in to Palembang to support the "counter-revolution," creating a very tense situation. This problem was resolved by Gen. Nasution, the Chief of Staff, who arranged for the withdrawal of the paratroops from Palembang, in the interest of avoiding hostilities.

There has been no resolution of the political-military impasse. The promulgation of an emergency decree on May 8, establishing a National Council (a pet project of Sukarno's), appears to have led the Sumatrans to conclude that Sukarno plans to establish a dictatorship. Tension is believed to have risen higher than at any time in recent months. This tension, coupled with the presence of former Vice-President Hatta and Masjumi leader Natsir in Sumatra, has tended to lend credence to recurring but unconfirmed reports that Sumatran leaders intend to establish an independent Sumatra.

Factors Supporting a Declaration of Sumatran Independence

The rebellious military regimes in Sumatra appear to enjoy substantial community backing. The Garuda Council, in South Sumatra; the Banteng Council, in Central Sumatra; and the Iskander Muda Council in Atjeh appear to have attracted the backing of the major elements of the population in support of their attitude towards the central government. This is all the more notable in the case of Atjeh, where a cease-fire on April 30 appears to have ended security disturbances in the area, which began in October 1953. The Atjeh rebels under Daud Beureuh appear to have come to terms with the Army commander opposing them, in the interests of a common front in defense of Sumatran interests. The armed force supporting the rebellious regimes in Sumatra is estimated to total about 25,000 troops, not including an unknown number of irregular, local levies raised recently. While the central government has control of some 180,000 troops, most of these are tied down by administrative and internal security duties in other areas, and in any event, they probably could not be transported to and landed successfully in Sumatra. Militarily, then, the position of the dissident Sumatran regimes is fairly strong.

SECRET

SECRET

- 3 -

Factors Opposing a Declaration of Sumatran Independence

An independent Sumatra would face serious political and economic problems, of which the dissident Sumatran leaders are probably aware.

There is no outstanding leader available to rally all factions in Sumatra, nor is there a single dissident organization. Some of the Sumatran factions appear to look to former Vice-President Hatta, who was born in Sumatra, to be such a leader. However, it is doubtful that Hatta would be prepared to lead an attempt to destroy the Republic of Indonesia, which he helped to create in 1945. This was made clear in a speech delivered by Mr. Hatta at a mass meeting in his home town of Bukittinggi, Central Sumatra, on May 16. Hatta, referring to the recent establishment of dissident regimes in the provinces, said that they are not separatist or provincial movements but are aimed at the development of the whole Indonesian archipelago. He observed that "development of the country cannot solely be dependent on the central government," and added that the provinces should be given broad autonomy to enable them to regulate their own development and affairs. At the same time he warned that current political strife, if allowed to take its course, would lead to anarchy. There is little evidence in this speech to support the view that Hatta would be prepared to lead a separatist movement in Sumatra.

Possibly even more significant was the fact that Mr. Hatta shared the platform at this mass meeting with Col. Hussein, chairman of the Banteng Council and Col. Simbolon, insurgent commander of North Sumatra. Both dissident leaders appeared to associate themselves with Hatta's views. Simbolon, in particular, denied that the recent risings in the provinces were aimed at independence from the central government.

Sumatra is populated by four major and several lesser ethnic groups, with substantial differences in language, religion, and culture. The Atjehnese in North Sumatra are Moslems - fierce, proud, and independent. The Bataks, in North and Central Sumatra, are part Moslem, part Christians, and part pagans and possess a substantial grievance against the coastal Malays near Medan over ownership and use of hereditary Batak lands. The Menangkabau people in Central Sumatra are Moslems, have provided many of Indonesia's present leaders, and would expect to lead an independent Sumatra. Finally, through the central government-sponsored resettlement program in South Sumatra and recruitment of laborers for the rubber and tobacco estates in the Medan area, close to 1.5 million Javanese live in Sumatra, out of a total population of about 11.5 million. The Javanese might be expected to oppose separation of Sumatra from their ancestral homes in Java. Armed, Communist-organized Javanese estate workers in the Medan area would be a subversive force of considerable strength, should Sumatra declare its independence.

SECRET

SECRET

- 4 -

On the economic side, Sumatra is a food deficit area, dependent on exports of its industrial raw materials to the outside world for its subsistence. While Sumatra exports enough to be able to cover essential imports, the margin is not large enough to meet urgent developmental needs. Communications are in particularly poor condition, with east-west roads limited or non-existent.

Finally, it is doubtful if Sumatra meets the basic qualification for nationhood, a feeling of national unity. While there are surface indications of similarities of outlook in various areas of Sumatra toward the central government, there is no evidence of deepseated Sumatran unity. Opposition to Djakarta is an important element in current Sumatran cohesion, an element which would presumably disappear with the creation of an independent Sumatra.

Possible Central Government Action to Forestall a Sumatran Declaration of Independence

Relief of existing tensions in Sumatra may be sought by the central government through implementation of present and possible future developmental programs. Prime Minister Djuanda, in contrast to Sukarno, has conceded to the Banteng Council the need for greater developmental activity in Sumatra and has promised to do what he can, within the limits of available resources, to meet local demands for better communications, schools, and medical facilities. Foreign sources of capital may also be available for these purposes. The recently-concluded developmental loan by the US to Indonesia envisages expenditure of about US\$7,000,000 on the arterial highway between Tarutung, North Sumatra, and Bukittinggi, Central Sumatra. An additional US\$8,000,000 are to be spent on diesel electric generators in Sumatra and other areas of Indonesia. Conclusion of a reparations agreement with Japan might make available to Indonesia upwards of US\$250,000,000 in cash or consumer goods, with the possibility of substantial Japanese investments in Sumatra. The central government might also use a portion of the US\$100,000,000 Soviet credit of September 1956, for developmental purposes.

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State - FD, Wash., D. C.